



Bloomberg Business News (2-2) U.S. EPA Says New Data Motivated More Testing of Dimock Wells

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U.S. EPA Says New Data Motivated More Testing of Dimock Wells

By Jim Snyder - Feb 1, 2012

The U.S. was "compelled to intervene" and test water in Dimock, Pennsylvania, after data from Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. showed hazardous substances in drinking-water sources, the Environmental Protection Administration said.

The explanation was in a Jan. 31 letter from Mathy Stanislaus, EPA assistant administrator for solid waste and emergency response, and Shawn Garvin, an agency regional administrator, to Dan Dinges, Cabot's chief executive officer. Dinges had said the EPA's decision to test 60 wells and provide water to four homes in the area caused confusion and undercut President Barack Obama's stated commitment to natural-gas drilling.

"We did not take this step lightly but felt compelled to intervene when we became aware of monitoring data, developed largely by Cabot, indicating the presence of several hazardous substances in drinking-water samples, including some at levels of health concern," according to the letter, which the EPA provided to Bloomberg News. "Our actions have been only guided by science."

Garvin and Stanislaus said the data available is "incomplete and of uncertain quality," warranting further testing.

Federal Lawsuit

Dimock residents claim that hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, by Cabot (COG) polluted their water wells and have sued the Houston-based company in federal court. Cabot disputes the allegations. The drilling technique involves injecting millions of gallons of chemically treated water underground to shatter rock and let gas flow.

In a Jan. 26 letter to the EPA, Dinges said the agency had presented "no credible evidence to suggest that its new sampling initiative is a wise use of resources." Cabot had provided more than 10,000 pages of data based on testing at more than 2,000 wells in the Dimock area, Dinges

said.

Later, in a statement, the company said the information that prompted the EPA's review doesn't "accurately represent the water quality."

On Dec. 6, 2011, residents presented additional information to the agency, including results from Cabot testing; that "warranted further evaluation of the situation," Garvin and Stanislaus wrote. They said the EPA operated as a critical backstop to state oversight and would use its authority "prudently and sparingly."

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